



Same Old Lang Syne by TKDP

Category: Stranger Things, 2016

Genre: Romance

Language: English

Status: Completed

Published: 2016-12-17 12:27:32

Updated: 2016-12-17 12:27:32

Packaged: 2019-12-17 14:52:17

Rating: K+

Chapters: 1

Words: 3,557

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Songfic! It's Christmas Eve and Jonathan is visiting Hawkins from New York. While shopping for Christmas dinner, Jonathan reconnects with someone he never expected to see. Jonathan/Nancy

Same Old Lang Syne

Hey guys! I wanted to make a Christmas one-shot, but didn't know what to write about (though in retrospect, I have lots of time. XD!). That was, until I heard 'Same Old Lang Syne': by Dan Fogelberg. I LOVE this song, and I was surprised to find it MIGHT fit Jonathan and Nancy well. So, I decided to write a song fic! Warning: This story gets quite sad at times, don't say I didn't warn you. There are also some scenes involving drinking, but that's in the actual show too, so I think that shouldn't freak you out. Anyway, onto the story!

Why didn't mom tell me what bird she wants for Christmas Eve? Jonathan thought to himself, as he looked between the chicken, duck, and turkey displayed in the grocery store poultry section. Jonathan had insisted he buy Christmas Eve dinner for Joyce, despite her protest. Jonathan's photography company was growing in popularity, and he knew Joyce didn't have much money. At this point, almost all her salary went towards regular groceries and Will's college fund.

Jonathan sighed, and decided to find some other foods and see which meat went best with the side dishes. He headed into the frozen food section, knowing it would be cheaper and he'd catch heck from Joyce if he brought home food that would drain his bank account.

Jonathan opened one of the freezers and pulled out frozen peas and broccoli. He also grabbed some carrots for good measure, unsure which vegetable Will still liked. It'd been some time since he'd asked.

Jonathan continued walking down the frozen food aisle, until someone made him pause. Standing in front of him was a woman who looked strangely familiar. She was facing the refrigerators, so Jonathan couldn't see her face, but her wavy brown hair and slim figure tugged at his memory. It wasn't until he saw what she was staring at – Eggos inside the freezer – that he was shocked with a memory of lying in bed beside the same person, six years ago.

He touched her sleeve. "N-Nancy? Is that you?"

The woman turned around quickly, looking surprised. "D-do I know

you?"

Jonathan paused to take in Nancy's face, and she did the same. Nancy hadn't changed much. He didn't think she'd grown, though her hair was a little longer. There was also an air of maturity surrounding her, though he couldn't explain why he felt this.

Suddenly, her eyes flew open wide, and a smile broke across her face. "J-Jonathan?! Is that you?!"

Jonathan could only nod and smile as Nancy threw her arms around him. Unfortunately, she dropped her purse and the contents of it spilled across the floor.

At first, Nancy look mortified, until she saw Jonathan chuckle. Then she did the same, and soon they were both laughing until tears ran down their cheeks.

"It's been so long! H-How have you been?" Nancy stuttered, still seeming in shock. Jonathan knelt down to pick up her things and Nancy got down to help him. At one point, they both reached for her comb and their hands grazed each other's, and Nancy pulled her hand away quickly.

"It's been okay," Jonathan responded, feeling a bit distracted.

"How was...was..." Nancy seemed to be trying to remember something, so Jonathan helped her out.

"NYU?" he suggested.

"Oh, yeah! How was NYU?" asked Nancy.

"NYU is a really great school," said Jonathan, smiling with pride. "I've wanted to go there since I was a kid, and now I've finally graduated."

Nancy smiled. "I'm glad *you* got to live your dream." Jonathan wasn't sure if he heard sadness in her voice, or if he was just imagining things.

"So, what did you do after high school?" asked Jonathan, suddenly feeling embarrassed for not knowing.

"I...stayed in Hawkins," said Nancy.

"Really? You live here?" asked Jonathan.

"No," said Nancy. "I mean, I went to college here. I moved to Illinois after college. I'm just visiting Hawkins for Christmas."

Once they had collected all of Nancy's items, they grabbed what they needed from the frozen food aisle and Jonathan headed towards the poultry section. To his surprise, Nancy followed him. She didn't buy anything, though.

"Really? What's there for you in Illinois?" asked Jonathan.

Nancy swallowed awkwardly. Before she could answer, though, the man working at the poultry counter asked Jonathan what he wanted, and Jonathan decided on turkey.

Nancy didn't answer his question as they walked to the check-out stand, but Jonathan persisted as the cashier totaled up and bagged her groceries. "So? Why're you in Illinois? I thought you'd want to go someplace sunnier." He tried to keep his question comical, but Nancy knew he was referring to her anxiety around snow ever since she entered the Upside Down.

"...Steve. Steve's in Illinois," Nancy said, quietly.

"Y-you and Steve..."

"We're married now, Jonathan. Have been for two years."

At first, Jonathan didn't know what to say. He wasn't sure if he should be happy for her, or angry he wasn't invited to the wedding. However, he felt neither of these feelings. Instead, he felt his throat go dry, and a strange stab of pain in his chest. "I-I'm happy for you," he barely managed to choke out.

Nancy nodded. "Thanks..."

Jonathan couldn't think of anything to say. Luckily, the cashier cut in before he'd be expected to respond. "Thank you for your purchase, Miss."

Nancy nodded curtly, and Jonathan quickly placed his few items on the conveyor belt. The cashier rang up those items too, and soon Jonathan found himself walking towards the parking lot beside Nancy, in complete silence.

Nancy walked up to her car and placed the groceries in the trunk, and Jonathan popped the trunk of his car and did the same. Before Nancy could step through the driver's side door, however, Jonathan mumbled. "You...want to get a drink?"

Jonathan was beyond thrilled when Nancy agreed, though he tried to hide his excitement, and soon the two were walking down Oak Street to find an open bar. However, it was late on Christmas Eve so they couldn't find one that was open. Not that there were many in Hawkins, anyway.

"Well, this is just great," Nancy said, sarcastically. "What do we do now?"

Jonathan shrugged. "I thought I saw an open liquor store 2 blocks back. Why don't I grab a six-pack while you go back to your car?"

Nancy smiled. "Okay, I have some money if you want to split the-"

Jonathan held up a hand, stopping her mid-sentence. "It's on me, don't worry."

"Oh, Jonathan, you don't have to-"

"I insist." Jonathan smiled, letting Nancy know he was more than willing to pay. Nancy smiled back and turned to walk back to her car, but stumbled over her own feet in embarrassment. She seemed very distracted, though Jonathan couldn't tell why...

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"Cheers," Jonathan said, clinking his beer bottle against Nancy's.

"Cheers to Christmas," said Nancy, though she didn't drink it. She just stared forward, a sad look in her eyes.

"Are...are you okay?" Jonathan asked, tentatively.

"Yeah..." murmured Nancy. "I just realized, it's been so long...we don't really know much about each other, do we?" She stared down at the beer that she absolutely hated the flavor of.

"Okay..." said Jonathan. "So, what's your life been like since I went to NYU?"

"Well, like I said, I married Steve," said Nancy.

"How old were you?" asked Jonathan.

"Twenty-one," she grumbled to herself. Jonathan tried not to react, but Nancy sucked in a breath and said. "I know, I don't think I was ready either. It worked out though. He became an architect and got a nice amount of money from his parents. We live in Springfield now, suburban area at the end of the cul-de-sac."

"Suburban girl, huh?" teased Jonathan, instantly regretting he said anything. However, Nancy didn't even react.

"Yeah, I guess." It took Jonathan a moment to realize she didn't even remember the conversations they'd had while practicing shooting a can and monster hunting in the woods. The pain in his chest seemed to increase. "It's a classic, Christmas-card house," Nancy continued. "Red brick walls, white picket fence, flower boxes outside the windows, big yard, you know the kind."

Jonathan gulped. That wasn't what he'd predicted Nancy's future to be like *at all*. He once thought she'd become an explorer or something, after the whole Demogorgan incident. She was so brave... maybe that had been wishful thinking.

"I bet it's nice," said Jonathan.

"Yeah, warm, dry, safe from giant humanoid-monsters," Nancy teased.

"Are you happy?" asked Jonathan, unsure where the question came from.

Nancy's breath hitched and she bit her lip, before shaking her head slowly. "No."

"Why?" asked Jonathan, keeping his voice soft.

"Steve talked me into marrying him," she said quietly. "But I don't love him. At least, I don't think I do." Nancy shook her head in a way that suggested she was scolding herself. "Now I know what it's like to be my parents."

Jonathan sighed. "You aren't like them. You're strong, and-"

"Let me guess, 'no one can tame me'?" asked Nancy. "Believe me, I heard the same thing from Mike. It's not true, you know?" Before Jonathan could persist, Nancy asked. "So, what's happened to you since NYU?"

So Jonathan told her everything. He told her about entering a professional photography contest and winning. He told her about going to work for a fancy photography company in New York. He told her about visiting Joyce whenever he could. Somehow, Nancy didn't look surprised to hear any of this. Jonathan was glad to know she thought so highly of him that working in New York was no surprise to her. He decided to give her some more interesting information.

Jonathan told Nancy about Hopper proposing to Joyce. Nancy had been present at the wedding, but she wanted to know all the details about Hopper getting down on one knee and popping the question. Jonathan told Nancy about the day when Will came out as gay, and about the high school dance where he took a 'just-a-friend' boy, even though no one believed that. Jonathan told Nancy about Mike, Will, Dustin, and Lucas winning the school science fair, and about him photographing the boys, and the picture ending up in the newspaper. All the while, Nancy discreetly wiped her eyes, wishing she'd been present for everything he was saying.

"I have another question," said Nancy. "How did you recognize me?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well..." Nancy blushed awkwardly. "I didn't exactly recognize you right away. Heck, I wasn't even looking at you. How did you recognize me?!"

Jonathan smiled shyly. "I...almost didn't, to be honest. Your hair was familiar, but I didn't know it was you until..."

"Until what?" asked Nancy.

Jonathan flushed red. "You know what? Never mind. You just don't look too different."

Nancy rolled her eyes. "That wasn't what you were going to say. You can tell me the truth, Jonathan."

Jonathan sighed. "Well...it was your eyes. When you turned around and I saw your eyes, I knew it was you. You have the bluest eyes I've ever seen, and that never changed."

Now it was Nancy's turn to flush red. "Th-thank you," Nancy stuttered. "I...don't know what to say." She averted her eyes, seeming in shock and disbelief.

"What?" asked Jonathan. "You act like no one's ever said that to you."

"Well...um...no one actually has," said Nancy. "You're the first."

"Not even-" Jonathan caught himself before he could say 'Steve'. Even after proving himself to be a good guy, Jonathan still never really liked Steve. Steve was still in the vast majority.

"Nope," said Nancy, seeming to know who Jonathan was thinking of.

"Well, it's true," said Jonathan. "They're like sapphires." *Okay, now that was weird.* But Nancy was smiling.

"Thanks," she whispered.

"You know, I saw you once," said Nancy.

"Well, duh, we lived in the same town."

Nancy rolled her eyes playfully. "No! I meant, while you were in New York. Steve took me, and I saw you in a record store." She smiled. "I know how much you love music. Some of those records looked expensive. You must be doing well for yourself."

Jonathan had honed in on the phrase 'Steve took me'. He hoped that didn't have to do with a honeymoon he didn't want to hear about at all. "W-what? Oh, yeah. The photography company is really prestigious, and it pays pretty well. I've been using some of the money to help Mom out with Will's college fund."

Nancy smiled. "I wouldn't have expected anything less from you."

"You know the hardest thing about the photography company?" Jonathan asked, out of the blue.

"No, what is it?" asked Nancy.

"I love photographing people," said Jonathan. "I love seeing big families of people, and being able to take their picture so they'll never forget the moment, but I have to interact with so many people. I have to travel all over the US and meet business people that need their photographs taken. It's really overwhelming sometimes. I can't stand talking to so many people."

He was surprised when Nancy laughed. "Oh, Jonathan Byers, I'm glad to see you never changed. I bet your 'vast majority' has doubled since I moved to Illinois."

Now Jonathan was smiling too. "Hey, at least I don't have a girlfriend. Then I'd be around people all day."

"What?" asked Nancy, suddenly seeming to perk up. "You don't?"

"Nah, I travel so much that I never really get to have a meaningful discussion with a girl," said Jonathan.

"Besides right now, you mean?" asked Nancy.

"I get the holidays off," said Jonathan. *But even if it was a work day, I'd still make time to talk to you.* Jonathan immediately chastised himself for the ridiculous thought.

"Are you happy?" Nancy repeated his own question back to him.

I'm living my dream. I have my own radio to listen to music, my own expensive cameras, my own apartment in a New York skyscraper. I'm

making lots of money and doing what I love, and I'm helping my mom with Will's college fund. I take pictures every day, and no one calls me a creep or a loser. I walk in the park and just look at the scenery, and no one tells me that's so strange. I have everything I ever wanted. "No," said Jonathan.

"What?" asked Nancy, seeming taken-aback by this answer. "Jonathan, from what you've told me, you're living your dream!"

"I know, I know," said Jonathan. "I have everything I ever wanted, and more. But it's like...*that's* why something's missing. I feel almost...empty."

Nancy gave him a sad smile. "You have everything you ever wanted, and now you want someone to share it with." She paused. "You know, you'd make a great dad. You've always been so good with Will..." She took his hand, and Jonathan traced over the faint scar that was still there. The one that matched his.

Jonathan chuckled. "I'm too busy for a child, especially without a wife. But Will visits whenever he can, so that's nice. He loves New York. Hopper's been helping with some expenses, so he's able to have more world experiences. At least, more than I did at his age."

"Maybe I could visit you at some point," murmured Nancy.

"I'd like that," said Jonathan, though he knew it wouldn't happen.

"Can we toast again?" asked Jonathan.

"To what?" asked Nancy, dreading having to take a swig of the nasty beer Jonathan had brought. However, she grabbed her bottle anyway.

"A toast to now," said Jonathan. "I'm happy we got to talk today. Happier than I've been in a while."

Nancy smiled for what felt like the thirtieth time today. "A toast. After all this time, we finally get to talk." Nancy forced herself to take a sip of the beer, though when Jonathan wasn't looking she dumped the rest out the car window. After that, Nancy leaned against Jonathan. Jonathan thought she might be drunk. Nancy was content

to let him think that.

In that moment, with Nancy leaning against him, snow peacefully falling around the car and Nancy actually not freaking out about it, there was so much Jonathan wanted to say. *I still have feelings for you. You deserve more out of life than what you're getting. You don't need to stare out the window, you can go out and take on the world. Why did you marry Steve? Why did you marry Steve? You don't love him. Would you like New York? It's pretty loud, but you get used to it.* He avoided one other question on his mind. *Have you and Steve thought about children?*

Nancy looked up at Jonathan, and realize their faces were inches apart. "Is there anything else you wanted to tell me?" she asked, breathily.

Jonathan gulped. *Nancy, there's so much I want to tell you.* "N-No," said Jonathan, then firmer. "No, nothing else has really happened."

As if this was a wake-up call, dragging them back into the reality outside of Nancy's car, back into the world and their places in it, dragging them apart from each other, Nancy jerked away from him. "O-okay. Yeah, nothing interesting really happens to me anyway. I mean, it's not like that. It's just that Illinois is pretty boring. That's not what I meant either, I just don't have much to say..." Nancy blushed. "Do I sound stupid?"

Jonathan gave her a half-smile. "First of all, yes, you do. But second, I get what you're trying to say." *You're a housewife. You stay indoors all safe with your warm, cushy life which you never wanted in the first place. Why, Nancy, why?*

Jonathan opened Nancy's car door, the hardest thing he'd ever done. Leaving, to him, was even more difficult than fighting the Demogorgan.

Nancy stepped out of the car, too, and walked with Jonathan to his car. "Thanks for escorting me," Jonathan teased lightly.

However, Nancy took him seriously. "Any time," she whispered, her mouth close to his ear. She kissed his cheek as he sat down in the driver's seat of his car, and Jonathan painfully realized that was the

last time she'd ever kiss him, and probably the last time she'd ever speak to him. Jonathan doubted Steve would let Nancy go all the way to New York, especially if he knew it involved Jonathan. Nancy then turned away from him, but he could hear her whisper. "Goodbye."

Nancy swung the driver's side door of her car open, and that was it. A minute later she was driving out of the parking lot and out of sight.

For a while, Jonathan just sat there in his car. The pain in his chest had turned into miniature bombs being exploded in his stomach. He wanted to bang his head against the steering wheel, to vomit up the beer he'd drank. He hadn't had enough to be drunk, so he knew the sick feeling came from somewhere else.

Heartbreak. A strange kind of heartbreak where you aren't losing someone you once loved and once had, but someone you've always loved but never had.

For a moment, the pain seemed almost familiar. Jonathan realized it was the same pain he'd felt in high school whenever he saw Nancy kissing, holding hands with, or just talking to Steve. It was a feeling of self-pity, anger at Steve, sadness at what he couldn't have, jealousy of the man who had stolen Nancy's heart and then promptly lost it again.

Jonathan wiped the 'snow' from his red eyes, and turned out of the parking lot, heading towards Joyce's house. He turned on the windshield wipers, because at some point while he was wallowing in anger and remorse, it had started to rain.

Jonathan drove down Oak Street, past the local church. Some children were singing there, and he slowed down to listen. The song was in old English, but he remembered Joyce explaining the meaning of the song to him when he was a child. It only amplified the stab of pain.

*Should old acquaintances be forgot, and never brought to mind?
Should old acquaintances be forgot, from a long, long time?
Should old acquaintances be forgot, and never thought upon?
The flames of love extinguished, and fully past and gone.*

Well, that was sad, now wasn't it? I like to imagine they end up with happy lives, but I wanted to write the fic as though, theoretically, Jonathan was right about Nancy being 'just another suburban girl'. Oh well, I really like this fic, and I hope you liked it too! Please review if you enjoyed, I really appreciate it! BTW, Oak Street is the actual main street from Stranger Things. Cool, right? Also, another side note, I just want you guys to know I don't condone affairs in any way. I'm not saying what Nancy did, and how Jonathan reacted to things, in this story is RIGHT, this is just how I wrote it. I say this because some people just LOVE to blow my inbox up with messages about how bad the morals of some of my stories are (which is ridiculous). Now that I got that out of the way, merry Christmas! (Because it's basically Christmas if it's December.) See you next story!